Discussion Paper for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia Task Force on Aging
October 2004

Additional Public Meetings:

Friday, December 3 9:00-11:00 a.m.	**Dartmouth Seniors' Centre**	**45 Ochterloney St.**
Friday, December 3 2:00-4:00 p.m.	**CNIB Auditorium (Halifax)** *(Parking at Halifax Forum)*	**6136 Almon St.**

Correction:

Please note the address for the Amherst Legion (Page 29) should be:
47 LaPlanche Street

105-01670/

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The crane is the Asian symbol for long life, health, and harmony.

Cranes are believed to be one of the oldest birds on Earth. Because of the uncertainty of the crane's life span, the Japanese imagined that cranes lived for a thousand years.

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Send written comments about the *Discussion Paper for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia* to the following address before December 31, 2004

Contact: *Valerie White*
Executive Director, Senior Citizens' Secretariat

Nova Scotia Department of Health
PO Box 2065
Halifax, NS B3J 2Z1

E-mail: scs@gov.ns.ca

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Table of Contents

Preface

A Message from the Honourable Angus MacIsaac, Minister of Health, Chairperson of the Senior Citizens' Secretariat 1

Introduction 3

Vision 5

Principles 7

Celebrating Seniors 8

Goal 1 - Celebrating Seniors

Goal Statement 9

Societal Actions 9

Ageism, Inter-generational Connections, Myths and Stereotypes, Seniors' Contribution to Society, and Social Involvement

Financial Security 10

Goal 2 - Financial Security

Goal Statement 11

Societal Actions 11

Consumer Issues (fraud and scams), Financial Security at Retirement, Lifelong Financial Planning, and Sustainability of Assistance Programs

Health and Well Being 12

Goal 3 - Health and Well Being

Goal Statement 13

Societal Actions 13

Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention, Determinants of Health, Health Services and Continuum of Care, and Health Planning and Research

Supported Living 15

Goal 4 - Supported Living

Goal Statement 16

Societal Actions 16

Community Care Options, Family Caregivers, Paid Care Providers, and Maximizing Independence

Housing 18
Goal 5 - Housing
Goal Statement 19
Societal Actions 19
Affordable Housing Options, Housing Design, and Planning for Housing Needs

Transportation 20
Goal 6 - Transportation
Goal Statement 21
Societal Actions 21
Affordable, Accessible Transportation, Driver Licencing, Rural and Urban Needs, and Pedestrian Safety and Falls Prevention

Valuing Diversity 22
Goal 7 - Valuing Diversity
Goal Statement 23
Societal Actions 23
Cultural Diversity, Gender Equity and Social Inclusion, and Diversity in Information and Services

Employment and Life Transitions 24
Goal 8 - Employment and Life Transitions
Goal Statement 25
Societal Actions 25
Age-Friendly Workplaces, Mentor and Apprenticeship Programs, Work-to-Retirement Transition, and Older Volunteers

Supportive Communities 26
Goal 9 - Supportive Communities
Goal Statement 27
Societal Actions 27
Elder Abuse, Volunteerism, Older Adult Education, Rural Issues, and Working Together

Public Consultation Schedule 29

Next Steps 31

Summary 32

Preface

A Message from the Honourable Angus MacIsaac, Minister of Health, Chairperson of the Senior Citizens' Secretariat

It gives me great pleasure to present the Task Force on Aging's *Discussion Paper for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia.* At the heart of the Task Force on Aging is our commitment to improve opportunities for seniors to participate in their communities and to ensure that government policies support this aim.

This discussion paper is an important step in developing the *Strategy for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia.* It is our hope that it will generate the kind of grassroots, province-wide input needed to ensure the Strategy reflects the desires, experiences and insights of all Nova Scotians.

The Strategy will serve to guide our government, and successive Nova Scotia governments, in planning for an aging population. Each month, 700 Nova Scotians turn 65. The population of seniors in Nova Scotia will nearly double by 2026. Statistics tell us that individuals, communities, businesses, and governments at every level must begin changing their practices now in order to maximize the opportunities and address the challenges associated with this demographic change. Predicting the future accurately and planning accordingly will be important, but in order to truly maximize the positive aspects of an older population, individuals, communities, and governments at every level must reaffirm the value of older people.

Seniors have skills, knowledge and experience to contribute to our society, and we all have an interest in ensuring they are able to remain active community participants for as long as possible. Their capacity for productive work—both paid and unpaid—is a valuable provincial asset. Their contribution to our province is immense, and will become more important in the coming decades. As well, involvement in meaningful activities is known to improve the outlook and well-being of seniors.

Attitudes and practices that fail to recognize seniors' contributions, or make it difficult for them to access health and other services, not only diminish their dignity, they undermine Nova Scotia's future quality of life. If seniors are undervalued or excluded from community life, our province will suffer. We can enhance our economic competitiveness by harnessing this immense resource; and we will be a caring, compassionate society by respecting and supporting this vital segment of the population.

The work being done by the Task Force on Aging, through this and future projects, demonstrates our government's commitment to positive aging and reaffirms the value of seniors in our society. Your participation in the consultation process will have a tremendous impact on today's seniors and on future generations of Nova Scotians. Please share with us your comments on the *Discussion Paper for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia.*

Introduction

by Valerie White, Executive Director, Senior Citizens' Secretariat Chairperson, Task Force on Aging Advisory Committee

The Task Force on Aging reinforces the Government of Nova Scotia's commitment to promote the value and participation of seniors in communities throughout our province. As staff at the Senior Citizens' Secretariat, it is our honour to lead this important initiative.

As the government agency responsible for coordinating the planning and development of policies, programs, and services for seniors, it is the Secretariat's belief that seniors have been extensively consulted through various national, provincial and community-based initiatives. We felt it was time to stop asking, "What do you need?" Instead, we set out to create a discussion paper that asks, "Have we heard you correctly?" Getting a clear answer to this question is important, because the next step is to develop the *Strategy for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia.*

The primary objective of the Strategy is to provide the framework for the government's planning agenda for the next decade and beyond, so it is imperative that we get it right. In fact, I cannot think of a long-term planning issue more central to the health and equity of our society. This discussion paper is a working document, and I encourage readers to suggest changes and contribute to the final strategy. Your feedback will help the Government of Nova Scotia provide the kind of insightful, forward-looking leadership needed to address the current, emerging, and future needs of an aging population.

The creation of the *Discussion Paper for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia* was guided by a 21-member Advisory Committee, consisting of senior government officials from key departments, representatives from seniors' organizations, and a cross-section of Nova Scotians who provide gender and age balance, as well as geographic and cultural diversity.

In creating the Discussion Paper, the Committee chose to adopt a modified version of the Vision Statement set out in the *National Framework on Aging.* The Discussion Paper also incorporates broad principles intended to guide the development of policies and services in a wide range of government departments and agencies. Here, we recognize, and concur with, the work of the Saskatchewan Provincial Advisory Committee of Older Persons.

While staying mindful of the Vision and Guiding Principles, we identified nine Positive Aging Goals that provide a focus for future policy and program development. They are listed in no particular order, with the exception of Goal #1 Celebrating Seniors. The explanation for this has been provided in the narrative that precedes this section.

For each goal, we recommended priority actions needed to achieve it. We called the key actions Societal Actions to emphasize that creating a society in which people can age positively requires more than government action - it depends on the involvement of individuals, communities, non-profit groups, businesses, labour, and all levels of government. Everyone has a role to play.

To this end, we hope you will take the time to give all aspects of the Discussion Paper careful consideration. Please note that the number, variety, and interdependence of topics has, out of necessity, resulted in occasional repetition and overlapping. And for clarity, the word "seniors" applies to people 65 years and older.

To assist you in responding to this discussion paper, we have provided a series of questions at the centre of the booklet. Your answers can be mailed, faxed or e-mailed. We also welcome toll-free telephone responses at 1-800-670-0065, and we strongly encourage attendance at public meetings scheduled between Oct. 25 and Dec. 2 (see Public Consultations Schedule).

Positive aging is a far-reaching concept. It is in everyone's interest that seniors are encouraged and supported to remain self-reliant, and are able to contribute to family and community well-being. But for seniors to maintain their independence, they must have adequate and affordable housing and support services that meets their needs. To access services and participate in their community, they need affordable and accessible transportation. A stable and secure income in retirement is also essential. Healthy lifestyle choices and appropriate preventive health and social support services throughout life also enable people to age in a healthy and productive way.

These are just some of the issues addressed in the *Discussion Paper for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia.* As an important step in developing the *Strategy for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia,* we are presenting it for your input. Province-wide participation at this stage is vital to advancing a shared vision of a society that ensures long life, health and harmony for older adults in Nova Scotia.

Vision

Harnessing the Power of a Strong Vision Statement

A clearly defined vision acts as a magnet to pull us forward in the direction we want to go. It inspires unity and helps people stay on track and focused. It provides a broad, long-term definition of the scope and ambition of the task at hand. A strong vision statement becomes a yardstick that measures the relevance of what we are doing.

Vision for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia, a society for all ages, promotes the well-being and contributions of older people in all aspects of life.

Principles

Principles guide the actions by which the Vision is achieved. They are enduring and essential. They are concepts that reflect a code of conduct. The principles below need to be considered together as they are interrelated in promoting the overall well-being and contributions of seniors. When finalized, the guiding principles will become an essential part of the *Strategy for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia*.

Dignity - being treated with respect regardless of the situation and having a sense of self-esteem.

Independence/Self-Determination - being in control of one's life, being able to do as much for oneself as possible and making one's own choices.

Participation - remaining integrated in society, getting involved, staying active, taking part in the community and being consulted and having one's views considered.

Fairness - having one's real needs, in all their diversity, considered equally to those of other people regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, disability, economic or other status (eg. sexual orientation).

Safety and Security - having adequate income as one ages and having access to a safe and supportive living environment, including freedom from fear and exploitation.

Self-Fulfillment - being able to pursue opportunities for the full development of one's potential with access to the educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational resources of society.

Recognition - achieving intergenerational recognition and respect for contributions of older persons.

Source: Saskatchewan's Provincial Policy Framework and Action Plan for Older Persons, Saskatchewan Provincial Advisory Committee of Older Persons

Celebrating Seniors

It is no accident that Celebrating Seniors is Goal #1 in the *Discussion Paper for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia.* Celebrating Seniors is deliberately positioned first because positive aging in Nova Scotia will be a reality only when our society respects all seniors, values their knowledge, wisdom and skills, and acknowledges the considerable contributions they make to family and community life.

Seniors contribute enormously to their families, often through direct financial contributions in the form of substantial loans and gifts, and in important and valuable in-kind services, such as childcare. They contribute enormously to the quality of life in Nova Scotia communities, and to our economy. Seniors are a powerful consumer force, contribute a large share of government revenues, and are more generous with charitable contributions than any other segment of the population[1]

Unfortunately, for some of our elders, full participation in society is prevented by restricted opportunities or because of a low sense of self worth. Social exclusion can be perpetuated by a lack of access to family and friends, community resources and facilities, personal poverty, and negative attitudes toward aging.

An aging population makes it necessary to turn economic and social obstacles into opportunities. Government can play a central role in shifting attitudes, and in maintaining and strengthening bonds and understanding between generations.

For Positive Aging to be a reality, Nova Scotians of all ages must acquire a deep respect for the dignity of seniors and the wisdom they have gained from many years of experience. Our recent history resides in their memories.

[1] *On average, seniors donated $688 to charity in 2000, considerably more than the average of $488 for all ages. Over two percent of senior household expenditures went to charity, almost five times the rate for those under 55. (Statistics Canada, 2000 Survey of Family Expenditures).*

Goal 1 - Celebrating Seniors

Goal Statement

Nova Scotians value seniors and celebrate their contributions.

Societal Actions

Ageism

1. Eliminate policies and practices that discriminate on the basis of age.
2. Promote equity by ensuring that age is included in government diversity initiatives.
3. Foster collaborative relationships between levels of government, business, not-for-profit and community organizations that promote positive aging.
4. Encourage businesses to be more understanding and responsive to the needs of seniors and help them recognize the benefits of providing charitable support to seniors' organizations and programs.

Inter-generational Connections

5. Promote inter-generational programs in schools and communities to overcome ageist stereotypes, build inter-generational bonds and enhance the understanding of a wide range of historical topics, social issues and cultural perspectives.

Myths and Stereotypes

6. Improve public perceptions by ensuring government communications and the media portray positive images of seniors.

Seniors' Contribution to Society

7. Acknowledge seniors as the trustees of our culture and ensure that their skills and life experiences are valued and utilized.

Social Involvement

8. Develop and implement strategies to reduce social isolation and loneliness among seniors to prevent a decline in their physical, mental and spiritual well-being.
9. Provide opportunities to support seniors in becoming leaders, giving them the information, skills and resources needed to assume and succeed in leadership roles.

Financial Security

There is a great deal to consider in planning for an aging population. Many factors can severely impact the ability of today's seniors to provide themselves with the necessities of life.

The incidence of poverty is lower for seniors than other Nova Scotians (six percent of seniors lived below the low-income cut-off in 1999, compared with 14 percent of the general population), due in large part to federal government programs such as Old Age Security, Guaranteed Income Supplement and Canada Pension Plan. As well, aging baby boomers are, in general, more financially secure than their predecessors. This group has more pension coverage and access to investments than any other previous group of seniors.

However, the current rate of economic hardship among senior women is a serious concern. In 1999, of the 7,000 seniors below the low-income cut-off, 85 percent were women living by themselves. For the vast majority of these women, a lifetime spent caring for others results in financial hardship that limits their ability properly care for themselves.

Ensuring that low-income seniors are able to cope with rising or unexpected costs, such as home heating, property taxes, medical expenses, and the need for mobility aids, is critical to positive aging in Nova Scotia. In meeting the demands of one expense, low income seniors may sacrifice nutrition or medication, thereby jeopardizing their health and increasing hospitalizations or accelerating the need for long-term care.

Ensuring the long-term viability of federal government programs, as well as other financial supports provided at the provincial and municipal levels—while also ensuring the vulnerable seniors are able to manage cumulative costs—is vital to positive aging in Nova Scotia.

Goal 2 - Financial Security

Goal Statement

Secure and sufficient income that provides an adequate standard of living for older Nova Scotians.

Societal Actions

Consumer Issues (fraud and scams)

1. Increase awareness of legal and consumer issues affecting seniors.

Financial Security at Retirement

2. Regularly review Nova Scotia's seniors' benefits programs to recognize rising and new costs to seniors and accommodate increased demand.
3. Educate seniors about financial support programs available to them to increase the percentage of eligible people applying.
4. Regularly review income support provisions to ensure they provide an adequate standard of living for seniors, particularly those who depend on public pension incomes, most of whom are women.
5. Develop policies that reflect the unique needs of persons with disabilities when determining an "adequate" standard of living.

Lifelong Financial Planning

6. Make pre-retirement seminars on financial planning more widely available and promote the importance of lifelong learning, community service and active living throughout the life-cycle.
7. Improve the portability of pension plans, enabling workers to change careers and/or move between provinces without sacrificing their investments.
8. Examine how provincial labour standards could be improved to support financial security in retirement for part-time, seasonal and casual workers.

Sustainability of Assistance Programs

9. Perform long-term forecasts for benefits programs relating to seniors to ensure long-term viability and evidence-based decisions.
10. Modify government budgets to accommodate increased demand in some sectors, and decreased demand in others, as costs shift with an aging population.
11. Work with the Federal Government to eliminate discriminatory sections of the Canada Pension Plan, such as those that discriminate on the basis of marital status, and to ensure contribution levels meet anticipated demand.

Health and Well Being

To help Nova Scotia's seniors stay healthy, it is important to address the many factors that affect their physical and mental health. A major one is income security. Seniors with adequate income have a better chance than those with lower incomes to remain independent and healthy because they can afford comfortable housing, transportation, and nutritious food. They can also afford non-insured medical services and supports, such as medication and home care and community support services that prevent illness and maintain health. Other factors that can affect their health are:

- education
- health services
- gender
- culture
- personal health practices and coping skills
- support of family and friends
- employment and working conditions
- social and physical environment
- biology and family medical history

Health planning must ensure health services can be maintained into the future and are able meet the growing needs of an aging population. To reduce the demand for health services, particularly hospital-based and long-term care services, strategies that promote health are also required.

Effective health planning recognizes how factors affecting health are inter-related and the collective impact they have on the health of seniors and the population as a whole. Health promotion strategies that address the "determinants of health" can improve the health habits of seniors, and prevent or reverse many health problems or declines in functional ability.

For positive aging to be a reality in Nova Scotia, health planning must focus on developing health policies that can be maintained into the future, creating supportive environments for seniors, strengthening community actions to support seniors, and reorienting health services to meet the needs of seniors.

As the population ages, the incidence of injuries and chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and dementia will increase. Meeting the health needs of seniors will require the concerted efforts of all those working across the entire health and community services systems, in both the public and private sectors.

Goal 3 - Health and Well Being

Goal Statement

A health system that ensures older Nova Scotians have the opportunity to be as healthy and independent as possible.

Societal Actions

Health Promotion, Disease and Injury Prevention, Determinants of Health

1. Encourage individuals and families to plan and prepare for older age, and support their efforts to live healthy active lives.
2. Engage partners in developing and implementing population health strategies that address the determinants of health, promote the overall health and well-being of seniors, and help prevent injuries due to falls.
3. Educate seniors about the wide array of programs and services available and identify navigators who can help them access the service that best meet their needs.
4. Use a variety of ways to communicate health information to seniors based on best-practice, and accommodate literacy levels to help seniors understand the factors that affect their health and help them maintain their health.

Health Services and Continuum of Care

5. Ensure a range of integrated, client-centred, quality and appropriate health and support services is available, responsive and accessible, and reasonably close to home so that seniors can maintain their health, and family and community connections.
6. Ensure that a range of integrated, quality, and appropriate health and support services is available and accessible, and reasonably close to home so that seniors can maintain their family and community connections.
7. Develop policies to ensure low-income seniors can access basic services/products needed to be as healthy and independent as possible, such as medical transportation, oral health care, eye-glasses, hearing aids, medications, and mobility aids/treatments.
8. Provide geriatric training to health care providers to increase their awareness of the unique requirements of older patients/clients.
9. Ensure that seniors in need of care or support services have access to appropriate accommodations and can easily move from one care environment to another if their needs change.
10. Expand the reach of palliative care services so people who are terminally ill can be cared for in an appropriate and affordable setting of their choice.

Goal 3 continued

Societal Actions continued

Health Planning and Research

11. Engage geriatricians, gerontologists, those who advocate on behalf of seniors, and seniors themselves in the development of health policies and service delivery standards to ensure they are both age-appropriate and responsive to the physical and mental health needs of seniors from all ethnocultural backgrounds.
12. Encourage and support ongoing research to identify best practices for health promotion, disease and injury prevention, medication use, alternative therapies and remedies, and health care provision for seniors.

Questionnaire

Discussion Paper for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia

Your comments and suggestions about the *Strategy for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia* are important and will be reviewed by the Task Force on Aging to improve the strategy.

Directions: Please respond to the following questions in the space provided. If you require additional space to complete your answer, please use a separate sheet of paper and attach it to the questionnaire.

The questionnaire can also be completed on-line via the Secretariat's website at: www.gov.ns.ca/scs

1. Do you agree with the **Vision for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia**?

   Please comment or suggest changes. (Please be specific) _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Do you agree with the **Guiding Principles**?

   Please comment or suggest changes. _____

   _____

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   _____

3. Do you agree with the **Celebrating Seniors** goal and societal actions?

   Please comment or suggest changes. _____

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4. Do you agree with the **Financial Security** goal and societal actions?

Please comment or suggest changes. _____

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5. Do you agree with the **Health and Well-Being** goal and societal actions?

Please comment or suggest changes. _____

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6. Do you agree with the **Supported Living** goal and societal actions?

Please comment or suggest changes. _____

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7. Do you agree with the **Housing** goal and societal actions?

Please comment or suggest changes. _____

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8. Do you agree with the **Transportation** goal and societal actions?

Please comment or suggest changes. _____

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9. Do you agree with the **Valuing Diversity** goal and societal actions?

Please comment or suggest changes. _____

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10. Do you agree with the **Supportive Communities** goal and societal actions?

Please comment or suggest changes. _____

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11. Do you agree with the **Employment and Life Transitions** goal and societal actions?

Please comment or suggest changes. _____

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12. Are there any other **Positive Aging Goals or Societal Actions** you would like to suggest?

Please comment or suggest changes. _____

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13. Please identify what you consider to be the **Three Most Important Actions** to be taken to achieve the vision and goals of the *Strategy for Positive Aging for Nova Scotia. (Your suggestions may come from the Discussion Paper or other sources.)*

_____

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_____

14. Other Comments:

_____

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Thank you for your comments and interest in the Positive Aging Strategy.

Your responses to this questionnaire may be provided to the Senior Citizens' Secretariat in-person at a public meeting, by mail, phone, fax, or e-mail. **The deadline for submissions is December 31, 2004.**

Mail: Task Force on Aging, Senior Citizens' Secretariat,
P.O. Box 2065, Halifax, NS B3J 2Z1

Phone: (902) 424-0065, 1-800-670-0065 (toll-free)

Fax: (902) 424-0561

E-mail: scs@gov.ns.ca

If you would like to receive a copy of the final *Strategy for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia* when it is released, please provide your name and mailing address:

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Postal Code: _____

E-Mail: _____

Supported Living

The vast majority of seniors want to remain at home as they age. However, the pool of caregivers is diminishing.

Smaller family sizes mean there are fewer children to care for aging parents. The out-migration of young people in rural communities has created greater distances between family members. The increase in the divorce rate and the number of people who choose not to marry means there are fewer spouses to assume that role. On the other hand, with life expectancies increasing[2], grandchildren, other extended family members, and friends may be in a position to provide care.

Given all of these converging factors, the diversity of caregivers will increase, with more of the needed support coming from the broader community. The demand for paid care providers will also continue to grow. But despite this, families will continue to play a major role in providing care.

In fact, a full 70 percent of Canadian baby boomers expect to care for a family member in the near future. The number of caregiver households in Canada has tripled since 1987, and is projected to almost double again by 2007. Women make up 61 percent of caregivers and 64 percent of them work full time, while 42 percent are raising children under 18. Balancing a full-time job with raising children and providing eldercare brings significant challenges, and greater efforts must be made to alleviate the burden.

Many large companies have responded to the need for workplace policies to support the eldercare responsibilities of employees, in some cases extending benefits similar to those for childcare. But much more needs to be done to encourage and assist small businesses that have a small number of employees.

Furthermore, programs and zoning changes that assist families in providing alternate housing choices to elders, such as garden suites and accessory apartments, will create happier, healthier environments for seniors, enhance inter-generational bonds, and can delay or prevent the need for expensive services and long-term care facilities.

[2]There are two ways to look at life expectancy: Life expectancy from birth, and life expectancy for those who have reached 65 years of age. In Nova Scotia, life expectancy for females born in 1990 is 81 years; for males it is 73. Whereas, females who reached 65 years of age in 1999 are, on average, expected to live to 85, for males it is 81. (Population Projections, Statistics Canada)

Goal 4 - Supported Living

Goal Statement

Seniors are assisted to maintain independence and when needed are supported by family, friends, community and government.

Societal Actions

Community Care Options

1. Develop standards and monitor compliance to ensure boarding homes and assisted living facilities provide seniors with a safe and secure residence, quality services, and quality of life.
2. Respect individual autonomy, enhance empowerment, and maximize functional capacity of seniors in long-term care facilities (e.g. offering rehabilitation, providing accommodations for couples, respecting cultural beliefs and traditions, and facilitating access to the community outside the facility).
3. Increase opportunities to provide support for self-care, care provided by family and friends, and formal care provided by paid providers.
4. Increase awareness among Nova Scotians of the home care support options available to them.

...mily Caregivers

5. Provide appropriate education and supports, such as tax credits, in-home assistance, expanded respite care, adult day care, employment leave benefits, and continued pension benefits, so caregivers (family and friends) can carry out their responsibilities as family members and citizens' without compromising their own financial security or health.
6. Help small businesses identify affordable ways to create family-friendly workplaces that accommodate the needs of workers with caregiving responsibilities.
7. Ensure special provisions for child care benefits relating to the care of a dependent child also apply to caring for a senior family member.

Paid Care Providers

8. Monitor labour market information to ensure there is an adequate supply of paid care providers throughout the province to meet the needs of an aging population.
9. Acknowledge the underground economy associated with caring for seniors and offer training to untrained caregivers who are often hired by families on a casual basis to care for frail or terminally ill seniors.
10. Develop standards and monitor compliance to ensure seniors are cared for by qualified individuals in safe, secure and appropriate environments.

Maximizing Independence

11. Continue to encourage and support communities in developing safe and secure environments with the physical features, programs, and accessible services that enable older persons to remain independent.

Goal 4 continued

Societal Actions continued

12. Encourage municipal governments to include provisions in urban development plans to address the diverse needs of an older population.
13. Encourage and promote innovative product design and new technologies that extend and supports the independence of seniors.
14. Make information more widely available about the programs and services in place to help seniors remain independent.

Housing

Seniors have a strong desire to live independently and with safety, comfort and security for as long as possible. Whether older Nova Scotians can achieve this goal depends on planning and community design decisions made at the local level, as well as provincial and national efforts to ensure a range of appropriate, affordable, and accessible housing options is available.

The rapid growth of the older population is increasing the pressure on communities to find solutions that maximize the independence of older persons and delay the need for expensive services or long-term care facilities. Ensuring that viable, functional housing options are available to seniors, particularly in rural areas, presents a serious challenge both for older adults making housing decisions and governments involved in planning and policy making.

Inappropriate or insufficient housing options has a direct impact on the quality of seniors' lives, leaving some people isolated in their homes, unable to maintain their homes, dependent on others, or forced to relocate.[3] Housing options that facilitate positive aging therefore include home modifications that allow seniors to "age in place," prevent injuries such as falls, and make daily activities such as bathing and climbing stairs easier to perform. Other housing options address the need for a wide range of affordable living situations, such as seniors' complexes with progressive levels of care, private apartments, shared living residences, homesharing, and assisted living facilities.

Garden suites and accessory apartments also provide opportunities for seniors to retain their privacy and independence, while living on the same property as their families. A review of municipal zoning by-laws throughout the province and other policies and programs are needed to enable families with elderly parents to provide these types of supportive housing options.

For positive aging to be a reality in Nova Scotia, it is vital that housing options enable seniors throughout the province to live safely and comfortably throughout their lives.

[3] *Two-thirds (68 percent) of seniors lived with family in 1996; 59 percent with their spouse, and 9 percent with extended family. Nearly one-third (29 percent) of seniors lived alone. (Statistics Canada)*

Goal 5 - Housing

Goal Statement

Affordable, accessible, safe and supportive housing options are available to senior Nova Scotians.

Societal Actions

Affordable Housing Options

1. In partnership with the health and corporate sectors, respond to the need for innovative and affordable supportive housing options that allow seniors to remain connected to their families and communities as they age, particularly for low and middle income seniors in rural areas.
2. Provide incentives and support for families whose older relatives choose to live with them.
3. Work with municipal governments to ensure building codes, health, fire and safety regulations, zoning, bylaws and management practices reflect the needs of an aging population.
4. Monitor rising property taxes, insurance rates, and home heating costs and devise mechanisms to help seniors afford to stay in their homes.
5. Ensure appropriate access to home improvement grants and loans and enhance services based on population and need.
6. Inform seniors about the housing options and assistance programs available to them.

Housing Design

7. Provide incentives to private and non-profit sectors to design and build affordable supportive housing options for seniors that are close to transportation and daily living services, shopping, health services, and recreational programs.
8. Ensure the living environment and recreational opportunities in public non-profit housing complexes enable residents to lead healthy active lives and maintain a connection to their families and communities.
9. Encourage the construction industry to design and build homes with features that can accommodate the needs of older adults with mobility problems, many of whom will choose to age in place in their homes.

Planning for Housing Needs

10. Encourage and support ongoing research into:

    - the future housing and supportive care needs of seniors to ensure policy decisions and planning are based on the best information possible.

    - new building materials and construction methods to maximize efficiency, ensure safety, and reduce building and operating costs.

    - migration patterns and their impact on communities.

Transportation

For seniors, transportation represents much more than a means of getting from one place to another. Safe, affordable, and accessible transportation options enhance independence, and support access to essential services, as well as recreational, cultural, and spiritual activities.

Existing transportation assistance programs need to be expanded to meet the needs of an aging population and the demand for accessible transportation for seniors with disabilities will increase as our population ages.[4]

Developing new ways to utilize existing community resources, and building partnerships between municipalities, especially in rural and remote communities, will help to minimize cost pressures.

Because transportation comes in many forms, active transportation, such as walking and cycling, needs to be addressed in community planning efforts and infrastructure projects. Walking is an enjoyable way to exercise and socialize, contributing to mobility, personal health, injury prevention, and pleasure. For many people who cannot or do not want to drive, walking is essential for obtaining necessary goods and services. Attention needs to be given to the design and maintenance of sidewalks, the availability of benches and other places to rest. Eliminating or overcoming barriers, such as snow, and various features to enhance personal safety are also necessary in order to ensure that more seniors can realize the full benefits of walking.

In considering driver licencing provisions, it is important to emphasize that age alone cannot determine someone's ability to drive. Seniors are a diverse group. Some remain excellent drivers well into old age, while others develop chronic conditions and experience a loss of hearing and vision that may make driving unsafe. As well, seniors involved in car collisions are more likely to be injured than young people. Road safety is therefore paramount, but balancing safety with the needs of individual seniors requires compassion and understanding. The prospect of driver reassessment can be very intimidating and the inability to drive can create dramatic changes in seniors' lifestyle, at times leading to a loss of self-esteem, confidence, and access to essential services.

The concept of "Positive Aging" embraces the need to address the cost, convenience and accessibility of all forms of transportation, especially in rural Nova Scotia, and focuses on the needs of seniors when considering pedestrian and driver safety.

[4]In 2001, 49 percent of Nova Scotia seniors reported a disability. Of those seniors, 44 percent were aged 65-74 and 56 percent were aged 75+. A disability is defined as a physical or mental condition or health problem that interferes with participation in daily living activities. (Statistics Canada)

Goal 6 - Transportation

Goal Statement

Affordable, safe and accessible transportation options are available for seniors in communities throughout Nova Scotia.

Societal Actions

Affordable, Accessible Transportation

1. Meet the transportation needs of an aging population, especially in rural communities, ensuring that a lack of transportation does not prevent seniors from accessing essential services.
2. Ensure public transportation options are user-friendly in terms of accessibility, routes, timetables and affordability, and are safe for all ages.

Driver Licencing

3. Review the driver assessment process and licensing provisions to ensure they are based on ability not age.
4. Assess the driving ability of seniors in ways that balance safety concerns while respecting the dignity and independence of each individual.

Rural and Urban Needs

5. Explore innovative ways to better utilize the transportation resources within communities.
6. Promote and celebrate best practices for transportation models that service seniors.
7. Promote methods of active transportation (e.g. walking and cycling) and ensure routes are senior-friendly, including regulations that require safe access for pedestrian traffic around construction work.

Pedestrian Safety and Falls Prevention

8. Improve the safety of streets and walkways and work with community partners to increase awareness among seniors and the general public that most injuries can be prevented through personal and community actions.

Valuing Diversity

Nova Scotia is made up of people of diverse backgrounds. Valuing diversity is not merely the absence of discrimination. More fundamentally, it is the powerful presence of a sense of community that brings all people together and in doing so, creates a whole that is profoundly greater than the sum of its individual parts.

The vision of Nova Scotia as being a society for all ages is eclipsed only by the vision of Nova Scotia as a society that truly appreciates the value of cultural identity, gender equity and the fundamental freedom that comes from mobility and accessibility. Whether it involves the removal of obstacles which block individual achievement, overcoming language barriers, or enhancing the understanding of cultural differences, valuing diversity is about making concerted efforts to ensure services and support programs are shared equally by all our citizens.

Valuing diversity is based on a vision of a society which recognizes that all people are born equal, and each is entitled to an equal measure of human rights and good governance throughout their lives. A society that appreciates how diversity enriches the quality of life in Nova Scotia is one that has the well-being of all Nova Scotians deeply rooted in its beliefs and firmly ingrained in its conscience.

Goal 7 - Valuing Diversity

Goal Statement

Nova Scotians value diversity.

Societal Actions

Cultural Diversity, Gender Equity and Social Inclusion

1. Ensure governments and communities take cultural diversity, gender equity and social inclusion into account when designing legislation, policies and programs for and with seniors.
2. Ensure initiatives for seniors reflect the unique circumstances of Nova Scotia's Aboriginal community, both on and off reserve, as well as the traditional customs that the Aboriginal community practice with respect to senior and elder care.

Diversity in Information and Services

3. Ensure that information and services are available to seniors in a culturally appropriate and sensitive manner, recognizing the needs and interests of Aboriginal persons, African Nova Scotians, les Acadiennes/Acadiens and other Francophones, and immigrants from all parts of the world.
4. Increase the diversity of health and social service professionals and volunteers, and train all professionals and volunteers working with seniors to be sensitive to issues around language, culture, gender and disability.
5. Increase the inclusion and participation of immigrant seniors in social and recreational activities in their families, cultural communities and the mainstream community.
6. Ensure that all seniors benefit from the provisions of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act, through appropriately designed and targeted information and services to inform seniors of the grounds of discrimination covered under the Act, and the remedies available.
7. Ensure that policies related to taxation, pensions, and other aspects of income security recognize and address the need for gender equity.
8. Encourage a variety of sectors to enact policies that enable those who have disabilities to fully participate in community life.

Employment and Life Transitions

An adequate, well-trained, motivated and productive labour force is vital to maintaining economic prosperity and social well-being. Utilizing older workers more wisely can ease pressure on public pension and other income support provisions, and sustain or grow the tax base. Encouraging the 50-plus population to recognize their own value in the workplace as intergenerational mentors and role models can help reduce skills shortages and assist employers in retaining increasingly scarce and valuable talent. This does not mean compelling people to work beyond retirement age; it means giving those who wish to work the opportunity to do so. It's about giving older Nova Scotians choices.

The baby boomer generation is growing older, life expectancy is increasing, the annual number of births is falling, and net migration trends indicate that many younger people are moving out of their home communities, leaving rural Nova Scotia with a higher proportion of seniors than ever before. A dramatic shift in the workplace from "back work" to "brain work" also allows more older people to remain on the job longer. Collectively, these converging factors dictate the need to eliminate rigid distinctions between the time for learning, for caregiving, for work, and for retirement.

The financial uncertainty associated with life spans that can continue for 30 years or more past the traditional retirement age, and the dramatic reduction in personal savings in the past 10 years,[5] will see more people postponing full retirement in order to avoid financial hardship. Taking a longer term view of work life will also encourage older workers to pursue more education opportunities, and more people may choose to take time off from employment to care for an older relative or do more volunteering, provided they can return to the workforce for a longer period of time and under more age-friendly conditions, such as phased retirement, flexible work options, and retraining programs.

The future economy of Nova Scotia will depend in large part on older workers because they will soon make up a greater percentage of the total workforce. Furthermore, older workers generally have better attendance than younger workers and they show greater employer loyalty and commitment to quality. Recruiting and retaining experienced and skilled older workers is increasingly critical to the success of Nova Scotia businesses, as well as the overall health of our economy.

[5] *The personal savings rate for Canadians fell from 13 percent to 5 percent between 1992 and 2002 (Review of personal disposable income, Joe Wilkinson, Statistics Canada, 13-605-XIE).*

Goal 8 - Employment and Life Transitions

Goal Statement

Competence and choice are the primary determinants for participation in work, community service, learning and leisure.

Societal Actions

Age-Friendly Workplaces

1. Develop flexible workplace policies that provide older workers with options, such as a reduced work week, seasonal schedule, or the ability to work from home.
2. Ensure entitlements for training are provided to all workers, including older workers, and people who have dropped out of the workplace to care for family.

Mentor and Apprenticeship Programs

3. Encourage, promote and coordinate mentoring and apprenticeship programs that harness the skills and experience of seniors.

Work-to-Retirement Transition

4. Encourage human resources policies that support the employment of older workers and ease their transition from work to retirement.
5. Eliminate income security policies that serve as a disincentive to seniors in the workforce.
6. Abolish mandatory retirement through amendments in the Human Rights Code.

Older Volunteers

7. Encourage workplace reforms that support volunteering to promote a culture of life-long volunteering and community service.

Supportive Communities

Nova Scotia not only has an aging population, it also has the highest proportion of centenarians in North America, and possibly the world. A Time Magazine article (2004) comparing several regions around the world that have an unusual number of citizens aged 100 years or older, cited a strong sense of community support as one of the reasons so many of our people reach this extraordinary milestone.

The people of Nova Scotia can be proud of their efforts to create and sustain a society in which our eldest citizens are treated with caring support and given the respect and dignity they deserve. More of these efforts will be needed as an increasing number of Nova Scotians require caring support and our communities come to rely more on the volunteer work and leadership of seniors.

Nova Scotia currently has the oldest population in Atlantic Canada - the third oldest in Canada. In many of our communities, seniors already account for more than a quarter of the population (29 percent in Mahone Bay, 27 percent in Lunenburg, and 26 percent in Annapolis Royal and Digby).

Nova Scotia's aging population is reshaping our communities. Supporting personal growth and providing opportunities for full participation will help to ensure seniors throughout Nova Scotia live with confidence in a safe and secure environment and receive the services they need.

Planning for an aging population is an opportunity to improve the way generations relate to one another. More older people means more mentors, more caregivers, more volunteers, and more giving back to community. A fully engaged senior population will, in turn, enable Nova Scotia to sustain the kind of supportive communities that have garnered world-wide attention, and give rightful pride of place and satisfaction to seniors.

Goal 9 - Supportive Communities

Goal Statement

Communities support and protect seniors and provide them with opportunities for personal growth, lifelong learning, and community participation.

Societal Actions

Elder Abuse

1. Ensure appropriate legislation is in place to protect all seniors from abuse and neglect and ensure appropriate supports are available to assist victims of abuse.
2. Develop effective strategies to prevent and remedy the consequences of abuse, including increasing knowledge among seniors, families, caregivers, care providers, the media and the general public about the problem of abuse and neglect, how to spot abusive situations, and how to provide the necessary support to victims.

Volunteerism

3. Continue to promote volunteerism among people of all ages to ensure that charitable contributions of time and resources remain a strong and acclaimed characteristic of Nova Scotia society.
4. Ensure volunteers have access to training, information, and support and minimize their out-of-pocket expenses.
5. Create "supportive mentors" by coordinating and training volunteer peer counselors to intervene early in dealing with the challenges and concerns of growing older, such as depression, loneliness, grief and physical decline.

Older Adult Education

6. Expand opportunities for growth and lifelong learning and participation in leisure, active living, social and cultural events for seniors by identifying opportunities for community-based partnerships and maximizing the use of public facilities, especially in rural communities.
7. Provide community-based learning opportunities that reach out to seniors with low literacy, limited knowledge of English or French, and those at risk for health and social problems.
8. Ensure seniors can access programs to assist them in using modern technologies, such as banking machines, automated telephone systems, computers, and the Internet.

Rural Issues

9. Expand services and develop policies so seniors can age with dignity in settings that allow them to maintain connections with their families and communities and reduces the need for them to relocate should they require additional supports to remain independent.

Goal 9 continued

Societal Actions continued

Working Together

10. Support and encourage cooperation, partnership building, and the sharing of resources and information among stakeholders including community organizations, district health authorities, community health boards, family resource centres, seniors' organizations and all levels of government.
11. Encourage seniors' organizations to continue to bring forward issues, concerns, and ideas on behalf of older Nova Scotians.

Public Consultation Schedule

Date	Time	Community	Facility
Monday, October 25	6:00-8:00 p.m.	Neil's Harbour	Neil's Harbour Legion - 314 New Haven Rd.
Tuesday, October 26	1:00-3:00 p.m.	Cheticamp	Cheticamp Legion - 4 Legion Rd.
Wednesday, October 27	9:00-11:00 a.m.	Inverness	Fire Hall - Central Avenue
	2:00-4:00 p.m.	Baddeck	Fire Hall - Chebucto St.
Thursday, October 28	9:00-11:00 a.m.	Port Hawkesbury	Port Hawkesbury Legion - 303 Reeves St.
Tuesday, November 2	9:00-11:00 a.m.	Louisbourg	Louisbourg Legion - 7569 Main St.
	2:00-4:00 p.m.	Sydney	Sydney Legion - 101 Dorchester St.
Wednesday, November 3	9:00-11:00 a.m.	St. Peters	St. Peters Legion - 6834 Highway 4, Grand Anse
	2:00-4:00 p.m.	Antigonish	Arras Branch Legion - 294 Main St.
Thursday, November 4	9:00-11:00 a.m.	Guysborough	Guysborough Legion - Route 16
	2:00-4:00 p.m.	Sherbrooke	Old Temperance Hall
Friday, November 5	9:30-11:30 a.m.	Sheet Harbour	Masonic Hall - Highway 7
Monday, November 8	1:00-3:00 p.m.	Parrsboro	Parrsboro Legion - 55 Moore St.
Tuesday, November 9	9:00-11:00 a.m.	Amherst	Amherst Legion - 10 Princess St.
	2:30-4:30 p.m.	Truro	Colchester Branch Legion - 42 Brunswick St.
Wednesday, November 10	9:30-11:30 a.m.	New Glasgow	Normandy Branch Legion - 39 North Provost St.

see following page for remainder of list

Date	Time	Community	Facility
Tuesday, November 16	9:00-11:00 a.m. 2:00-4:00 p.m.	Barrington Passage	Lion's Hall - 2904 Hwy #3, Brass Hill
		Shelburne	Loyalist Branch Legion - 120 Water St.
Wednesday, November 17	9:00-11:00 a.m. 2:30-4:30 p.m.	Liverpool	Mercey Branch Legion - 1 Legion Rd.
		Bridgewater	Bridgewater Legion - 78 Churchill St.
Thursday, November 18	9:30-11:30 a.m.	New Ross	New Ross Legion - 64 Forties Rd.
Tuesday, November 23	9:00-11:00 a.m.	Yarmouth	Yarmouth Legion - 75 Parade Square
	2:00-4:00 p.m.	Saulnierville	Clare Branch Legion - Route #1
Wednesday, November 24	9:00-11:00 a.m.	Digby	Digby Legion - 92 Mount St.
	2:00-4:00 p.m.	Middleton	Middleton Legion - Corner of Marshall/Victoria
Thursday, November 25	9:00-11:00 a.m.	Kentville	Kentville Legion - 37 River St.
	2:00-4:00 p.m.	Windsor	Hants County Branch Legion - 35 Empire Lane
Monday, November 29	9:00-12:00 a.m.	Dartmouth	Dartmouth Centennial Legion - 703 Main St.
Tuesday, November 30	9:00-12:00 a.m.	Middle Musquodoboit	Bi-Centennial Theatre - 12390 Highway 224
Wednesday, December 1	9:00-12:00 a.m.	Halifax	Halifax Legion - 50 Hillside Ave. (Fairview)
Thursday, December 2	9:00-12:00 a.m.	Lower Sackville	Sackville Legion - 45 Sackville Crossroads

Next Steps

Between October 20 and December 31, 2004, the Task Force on Aging will receive your comments on the *Discussion Paper for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia.* In January 2005, the Task Force will finalize Phase 1 of its work by hosting several stakeholder forums to discuss specific positive aging goals. Feedback received during both the public consultation process and stakeholder forums will be used to modify the vision, guiding principles, goals, and societal actions that will form the basis of the final *Strategy for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia.*

Time lines for Task Force on Aging - Phase 1

Oct. 20, 2004	Release of the *Discussion Paper for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia*
Oct. 25-Dec. 2, 04	Public Consultation Meetings Throughout Nova Scotia (see Public Consultation Schedule)
January 2005	Topic-Specific Stakeholder Forums
Spring 2005	Release of the *Strategy for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia*

Phase 2 of the Task Force on Aging will also begin in January 2005 with the formation of a government-wide interdepartmental working group tasked with developing a detailed action plan to complement the Strategy for Positive Aging. The plan, scheduled for completion in November 2005, will identify specific actions to be taken, the agency/department responsible, partners, and related time lines.

To ensure that the *Strategy for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia* lives on and remains current, brief updates will be prepared annually to summarize the actions being undertaken by government and other organizations. A more comprehensive review will take place every three years, thereby creating a living document that will adapt and grow over the years as we work to achieve our vision.

Summary

Vision Statement:

Nova Scotia, a society for all ages, promotes the well-being and contributions of older people in all aspects of life.

Guiding Principles:

Dignity
Independence/Self-Determination
Participation
Fairness
Safety and Security
Self-Fulfillment
Recognition

Positive Aging Goals:

Goal #1 - Celebrating Seniors
Nova Scotians value seniors and celebrate their contributions.

Goal #2 - Financial Security
Secure and sufficient income that provides an adequate standard of living for older Nova Scotians.

Goal #3 - Health and Well-Being
A health system that ensures older Nova Scotians have the opportunity to be as healthy and independent as possible.

Goal #4 - Supported Living
Seniors are assisted to maintain independence and when needed are supported by family, friends, community and government.

Goal #5 - Housing
Affordable, accessible, safe and supportive housing options are available to senior Nova Scotians.

Goal #6 - Transportation
Affordable, safe and accessible transportation options are available for seniors in communities throughout Nova Scotia.

Goal #7 - Valuing Diversity
Nova Scotians value diversity.

Goal #8- Employment and Life Transitions
Competence and choice are the primary determinants for participation in work, community service, learning and leisure.

Goal #9 - Supportive Communities
Communities support and protect seniors and provide them with opportunities for personal growth, lifelong learning, and community participation.

NOVA SCOTIA

Senior Citizens' Secretariat